

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3A – Monday morning guided meditation

Linda: So take a few deep breaths into the belly. It's always good to do this at the beginning of a sitting just to reaffirm that you're here in your body. And that's your intention: just to stay here whatever happens, and anything could happen.

So take your attention to the top of your head and feel the sensation on the top of your head, in your head, whatever it is. Feel the sensation of your eyelids on your eyes, and keep breathing into the belly. Feel your breath going through your nostrils, in and out, feel your lips, your tongue touching your palate, your teeth, your jaw, and chin. Can you feel your ears?

When you're still you do start to feel subtle sensations that you usually ignore. Feel your shoulders. Many people tend to feel tension in the shoulders but while you're sitting, if you feel tension, rather than habitually moving, stay still, keep your body still, watch your reaction to it. Often in this practice we do the opposite to learned behaviour: tension bad – move to relieve it. So if you feel tension stay still with it, don't move, be with it.

So go to your left shoulder and go down your arm to your left elbow and feel your elbow, inside your elbow, however it feels. So there are no right and wrong sensations, there's no way that you should be feeling. Go down your arm to your left hand and feel your hand, and feel your thumb and each finger. Then go to your right shoulder and feel your shoulder, go down your arm to your right elbow, and keep breathing into the belly. Then go down to your right hand and feel your hand, and feel your thumb and each finger. Take your attention to your chest, and as you breathe in and out through the nose, feel the gentle movement of your chest as your body is breathing. So you don't need to think to breathe. You don't need to think to stay alive; your mind is not keeping you alive.

Then go down to the abdomen. This is the most tangible place in your body to feel your breath; it's a place that many people avoid. But really feel the breath down here, feel the rise and the fall of your abdomen as your body is breathing. And it will change, sometimes it will be strong and deep, other times very light, the breath will change. But use your breath, particularly the breath in the abdomen, as your mantra, your body's mantra.

Feel your thighs, your knees, your feet, your toes, and your spine from the top of the spine down your back to the bottom of the spine. So every now and again you might need to gently straighten your spine. It's good to have it fairly straight. Then again, feel your whole body. So this is not about trying to relax the body. It might feel relaxed, it might not, there's no right or wrong – it's about being in your body whatever happens, being where you are. So when you keep your body still you can see much more clearly that movement into thought, which is what thinking is. So try not to divide your thoughts up into, "Good, bad, I need to think this, I want to think this, I don't want to think this." Just see thoughts as thoughts. What you need to see is the thinking, that movement away from where you are. This practice is not about trying to stop thinking. It's much deeper than that. Eventually you get to the source of the desire to think, and that lies in your body. So thinking

is a very deeply ingrained habit, and it's encouraged from when we're very young – we're encouraged to separate ourselves by thinking.

We lose track of the fact that we're all human beings. You see a group of babies together and predominately they're babies. They haven't developed an ego, they're all individual, they've all got different natures, but the main thing is that they're babies. But as we grow up we start to want to be special. Fear separates us. But essentially we're all human beings, all of us. And we were all babies at one time too. So we're all in the same boat, nobody is special, or everyone is special.

So keep this practice simple. A lot will happen, but if you keep to this basic structure of coming back to the body it will help you cope as the mind starts to dissolve, as your ego starts to dissolve. So each time you realise you've been lost in thought, somewhere else – *pretending* you're somewhere else because you're not really somewhere else you're just pretending – bring your attention back to the body, and primarily the rise and the fall of the abdomen with the breath.